

Are You Singing The Brand-New Baby Blues?



Sleep isn't the only thing you lose after having a baby. Free time, privacy and spontaneity are some others. Many parents lose income or friendships and couples may feel the loss of the closeness they had before the baby came. The good news is, all of these things come back as children grow — but in the meantime, you're changing a lot more than diapers!

Change creates stress and too much stress can make anyone feel like they're losing control. For the new mom, hormonal changes may make you feel blue. No matter how much you love your child, those first few years can be hard on parents.

It is normal to be exhausted much of the time, but if you never take a break, parenthood can leave you feeling irritable, angry or overwhelmed. This can be dangerous to you and to your family.



How much stress is too much?



Warning Signs

- ☹ Losing your temper easily and over little things; yelling at your kids or spouse often.
- ☹ Bad moods that won't lift or feeling like your head is "in a fog" day after day.
- ☹ Relying on alcohol or pills to fall asleep. Waking up too early in the morning.
- ☹ Trying to parent alone or with minimal help from spouse, friends and family.
- ☹ Frequent feelings of resentment or even scary thoughts about hurting the baby.
- ☹ Ignoring your physical needs — to be pampered, exercise, eat well and rest.
- ☹ Ignoring your emotional needs — to be loved, have friends and get out of the house.

Simple Steps to Take

- ☺ Rest when the baby does and go to bed early. Lack of sleep can make you feel overwhelmed.
- ☺ Set up a support system with the help of neighbors, friends or your place of worship.
- ☺ Make a list of one small thing you can do each day that makes you feel good.
- ☺ Food can affect mood; cut down on processed sugar, fat and caffeine.
- ☺ Schedule time into the day for conversation with adults, on the phone or in person.
- ☺ Forget about having the house shining clean. Being happy is better than feeling like your work is never done.
- ☺ Turn off the TV and get yourself and your baby outside for some fresh air, rain or shine, every day.

Doctors say that 70% to 80% of women have "baby blues" after childbirth. This may seem strange and scary at the time, but they often go away in a few hours or a week or so without treatment. However, if the feelings are prolonged and intense, or the mother feels totally overwhelmed or out of control, the problem may be postpartum depression. If the baby blues don't go away after two weeks or if you have trouble coping with daily tasks, contact your doctor, counselor or clergy for help. Help is also available from the Virginia Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline — 1-800-552-7096.